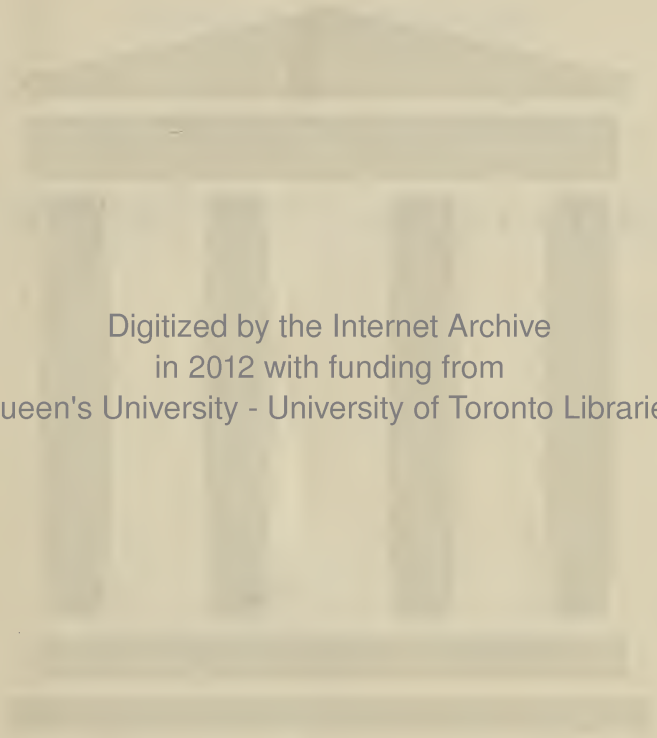


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Divine. vol. 1. p. 37. no. 434-435

FIRST REPORT

OF THE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE

APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO THE CAUSES WHICH RETARD THE

SETTLEMENT OF THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

OF

LOWER CANADA.

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Printed by order of the Legislative Assembly.  
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Toronto:

PRINTED BY LOVELL AND GIESON, FRONT STREET.

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FIRST REPORT.

21/2/86
THE Special Committee appointed to inquire into the causes which prevent or retard the settlement of the Eastern Townships in the Districts of Three Rivers, St. Francis, and Quebec, and to report on the most effectual means of promoting the settlement of the said Townships; and to whom were referred several Petitions on the same subject, with power to send for persons, papers and records, and report thereon from time to time, have the honor to present their First Report:

21/2/86
Your Committee have begun to investigate the subject submitted to their consideration, and have this day examined A. Polette, Esquire, M. P. P., as a witness. This gentleman has given his evidence before the Committee, and laid before them as forming part thereof, a certain document, headed, "*Le Canadien émigrant, ou pourquoi le Canadien-Français quitte-t-il le Bas-Canada?*" published on the 31st of March last, by the Reverend James Nelligan, *Curé*, and others, Missionaries in the Eastern Townships; both the evidence and the said document are annexed to this Report.

21/2/86
Your Committee think that the translation into English of the said evidence, with the document accompanying it, would be of great advantage to such of the Members as do not understand the French language; the researches and investigations which the Committee are desirous of pressing as much as lies in their power, would thus suffer no delay.

Wherefore Your Committee humbly submit the above facts to the consideration of Your Honorable House, and recommend the translation of Mr. Polette's evidence, together with the above mentioned document, into the English language.

The whole respectfully submitted.

T. FORTIER,
Chairman.

18th June, 1851.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

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TUESDAY, 17th June, 1851.

THOMAS FORTIER, Esq., in the Chair.

—

*Antoine Polette*, Esquire, one of the Members of the Committee, is examined as follows :—

Be pleased to state to the Committee what are the causes which have retarded the settlement of the Townships in Lower Canada ?—Various causes have contributed to retard the settlement of the Townships, but as they are amply detailed in a pamphlet, intituled, “ *Le Canadien émigrant, ou pourquoi le Canadien-Français quitte-t-il le Bas-Canada ?*” published on the thirty-first of March last, by the Reverend James Nelligan, *Curé*, and others, Missionaries in the Eastern Townships, I take the liberty of laying that document before the Committee. I could give no better answer than the contents of that pamphlet to the question now put to me, nor shall I say anything in addition thereto.



## APPENDIX.

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### THE FRENCH CANADIAN EMIGRANT ;

OR,

Why does the French Canadian abandon Lower Canada?

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To declare at once openly and frankly, that it is our intention to inflict on the public a long essay on the settlement of waste lands, tired as it must be of that endless subject, so often treated and with so little success, would perhaps be a sufficient warning to close the book at once; and yet, with that probable fate before us, we must pray for a hearing.

We cannot conceal from ourselves the truth, that our task is a difficult one. In the performance of a work, which is emphatically a labour of love and of patriotism, we expect to rouse the ill-will and the opposition of all those whose opinions, perhaps whose interests are crossed by the truths which we must tell. Criticism may excite a laugh at such labours as ours; may we hope that it will not seriously damage our cause?

On one hand, at least, we find encouragement. His Excellency the Governor General, replying in July, 1848, to a Memorial presented by the Catholic Bishop of Montreal, uttered expressions which gave general satisfaction throughout Lower Canada. "His Excellency is of opinion that the future greatness and prosperity of Canada will depend in great measure on the profitable use of the lands now waste and unproductive, and His Excellency considers that the most profitable use to be made of them, will be to cover them with a population of industrious, moral and contented settlers."

“Let us spread ourselves widely over the land,” some one has said, “that is the right way to preserve our nationality.” Yes, “let us enter on the land and possess it,” in all its breadth; dear as it is to us on many accounts, let us transmit it to our children improved, covered, embellished with national and religious monuments, the work of our hands. Our descendants loving it as we do, will bless our memory and will consider themselves bound, by gratitude, by countless traditions, which we shall leave behind us, to preserve their country, their language, their institutions, laws, customs, manners and character; and the national spirit will have gained a new element of vitality. He were no Canadian, no French Canadian, who had not at heart the speedy settlement of the waste lands of Lower Canada by his fellow countrymen. This is at least our earnest prayer, and the impulse which dictates our present address.

Like many others, seeing our fellow citizens wander forth to a foreign land, in search of bread and liberty, thus sacrificing the finest, noblest feelings of the human heart—the love of their native land—and thinning the population year by year, we have been impelled to pronounce it to be the urgent, the paramount duty of some one to labour to withstand the tide of emigration, by showing the advantages which the wanderers abroad leave behind them, the resources of certain sections of our country, and the obstacles which might prevent the easy acquisition and successful culture of the lands of their choice. Far be it from us to say that those whose duty it more especially was to care for these matters, have failed in that duty. No: many efforts have been made, and much information collected, many schemes of colonization have been broached and set on foot, or attempted to be set on foot. But have these schemes, these efforts been successful in any degree corresponding to the sanguine hopes of the projectors? We think not. The question then arises, “Can any thing be done at this late hour to favour the settlement of waste lands?” We sincerely believe there can, and would have all true lovers of their country to believe so too.

Of those who have been led to consider the settlement of the waste lands of the country, some, involved in the questions which divide political parties, have hardly found time to examine the true state of things with their own eyes; others, residing too far from the sections of the country most favourable and most accessible to colonization, have failed to attain that accurate knowledge of details, which is needed in forming and in carrying out plans for moving large bodies of people to new locations, and in surmounting the obstacles which may obstruct them. Some, themselves great proprietors, had interests of their own to consult, and did consult them, to the great detriment of the settlers, and, as a necessary consequence, of the country in general; others, friends of the great proprietors, and lending themselves to their interests, combined with them to shackle and impede the movement. The number of those, comprised in these two classes, is considerable, and their influence so great, that it may be well suspected of being the main hindrance to the success of the means hitherto used. And it is for this reason, that we appeal to public opinion, well assured that their private interests will not long be permitted to rival and defeat the general good of the country, and that, whenever the public have a just notion of the right means of promoting the settlement of the waste lands of the Province, and of the obstacles which lie in the way, the task of the Legislator, in smoothing the way and removing the obstacles, will be an easy one.

May we be permitted to say that we are, more than others, competent to point out these means—these obstacles? We may certainly claim some degree of authority in the consideration of the matter. Twelve in number, spread over a part of the country which deserves, more than any other, the notice of our emigrating citizens, and having each of us passed more or less time in the Eastern Townships, knowing the situation of the settler, through our daily, and familiar intercourse with him, we consider the task belongs of right to us of making the country which we inhabit, and its numerous



advantages known to our fellow countrymen. We have considered it a duty, to induce those of our brethren who are about to quit their native homes, not to leave their country without first visiting the Eastern Townships, and making themselves quite certain, that they will find superior advantages elsewhere. We have arrived at the conclusion, in fact, that it is our duty to lay bare, with an unflinching hand, the impediments to a speedy and prosperous settlement of the waste lands of the Townships, and to shew at the same time the means of removing them, in order that we may benefit to the fullest extent the settler and the country in general. It is needless to say, that we have collected all the facts and data within our reach, in support of the measures which we recommend, and that our mission and office ought to raise us far above any suspicion of a private and particular interest, to be furthered by this development of our views.

We shall strictly confine ourselves to the statement of facts of which we are certain. Our suggestions may be unseasonable, perhaps futile, even impracticable. The public will judge of these particulars. We claim, however, its favourable construction of our motives and our intentions.

We say again, that what we are about to advance will relate only to the Eastern Townships, and especially those comprised within the districts of Saint Francis, Three Rivers, and Quebec; but our observations on these may occasionally apply equally to the settlement of other parts of the country.

#### THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS.

The Eastern Townships, properly so called, is that great extent of habitable and fertile country, contained between the Chambly and Chaudière Rivers, in one direction, and between the frontier lines of Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire, and the seigniories of the districts of Montreal, Saint Francis, Three Rivers and part of Quebec, in the

other. This vast territory promises to become, at no distant period, the richest the most populous, and the most flourishing part of Lower Canada; not only on account of its climate, milder than that of the shores of the Saint Lawrence, of the immense extent of excellent and fertile soil which it includes, and of its abundant streams of water, but also, and more especially, because that part of our fine country borders on the territory of our industrious neighbours, and must be traversed by the main lines of communication between the two countries, as by the railroad from Montreal to Melbourne on the Saint Francis, and from Melbourne to Portland on the Atlantic, and soon hereafter, we trust, by that from Melbourne to Quebec.

The six great counties which the Eastern Townships comprise, Sherbrooke, Stanstead, Shefford, Missisquoi, Drummond and Megantic, contain according to Mr. Bouchette's computation, 4,886,400 acres of land, and their population does not, according to the (approximate) returns of the Population of Lower Canada of 1848, exceed 69,168 souls. In order to arrive at an (approximate) estimate of the numbers which the Eastern Townships might contain, we will suppose that two-thirds only of the superficial acres, that is 3,257,600 acres, are occupied, omitting the other third as worthless and unproductive, and allow one hundred acres to every settler, the result will be 32,576 landed proprietors. In 1842, the number of rateable landed proprietors in Upper Canada was about 65,000, the number of acres in occupation, 8,613,591, making 133 acres each; the population of Upper Canada was then 486,055. We may therefore conclude, without fear of being charged with exaggeration, that the population of the Eastern Townships will soon reach the number of 243,027 souls, that is to say, a number equal to half the entire population of Lower Canada in 1831. We would have the reader to observe, that the computation of 1,628,800 acres as unproductive, is far beyond the mark, inasmuch as the Eastern Townships, like Upper Canada, contain tracts of land considered to be unproductive, but very fit, in fact,

for cultivation, and needing nothing to render them valuable, but the application of a good system of drainage.

The features of the country which we are describing, are in general varied and exceedingly interesting. No one can have travelled from Port Saint Francis to Rock Island, especially in summer, without experiencing the most delightful impressions. What are the scenes, which do, in fact, present themselves, as we advance into these Townships? Here a valley whose fertility is strangely contrasted with the gloomy aspect of the forest we have left, there the eye rests in the distance on a swelling hill no less fertile, whose easy slope we may ascend almost without perceiving it. We follow the course of the Saint Francis. At certain points the level ground is limited to the breadth of the road: on one side, we see hundreds of feet below us, the Saint Francis, on the other we are hemmed in by a steep precipice rising far above our heads. Issuing forth from a defile, the perils of which are not devoid of attraction, we come upon a reach of the river here widened by an island, smiling with verdure; on one hand, we have a solitary farm-house, or a little hamlet whose neatness and even elegance may smooth the brow of the most ardent speculator; on the other a cascade, a factory, a mill, around which are grouped elegant and tasteful dwellings, and, no uncommon object, a pretty village church.

There are a considerable number of villages in the inhabited part of the Townships, and each distinguished by its particular kind of beauty. In one, the surrounding landscape charms the eye; in another the buildings, constructed, in a varied and capricious style; while of a third the most striking feature is its situation, at the foot of a mountain, on the border of a lake. Every Township, in any degree settled, has its village, some possess two. In the Township of Ascot, are Sherbrooke and Lennoxville; in Shipton, Richmond and Danville; in Grantham, Drummondville; with many others, scattered throughout the various Townships. The town of Sherbrooke is but a village more considerable than the rest,



and yielding in beauty to none. The nearer we approach to the frontier, the greater the appearance of prosperity ; and there the earliest settlements were made.

This extensive territory is abundantly watered : by the Saint Francis which has two main springs, namely, Lake Saint Francis, situated between the counties of Megantic and Sherbrooke, and Lake Memphramagog, upon the frontier of Vermont ; by the rivers Nicolet, Bécancour, Chaudière, and by others less considerable. The river Magog, passing through the town of Sherbrooke, furnishes water-power to several manufactories of cotton, wool, iron, paper and pails. As soon as the Railroad reaches that point, the water-power of the Magog, which is considerable, will add greatly to the importance of the town. The river Bécancour might be easily made navigable, by means of a cheap canal, from the falls in Inverness to Black Lake, a distance of only five miles. From this point, the Saint Francis, watering the Townships of Garthby, Weedon, Dudswell, Westbury and Ascot, affords a cheap and easy means of communication with Sherbrooke, in the very heart of the Eastern Townships. The importance of this water communication, which passes through a tract of country, a hundred and one miles in length, may easily be conceived. It opens out to the labours of the agriculturist, and the enterprise of the merchant, the beautiful valley, watered by the Bécancour and the Saint Francis, destined to become one day one of the richest sections of the Eastern Townships.

Throughout the vast tract of country we are describing, we find a great number of petty streams, affording water power, which might be turned to profitable account, with no great outlay of capital. Here we may remark, that the Townships are free from the burthens of the Seigniorial Tenure ; and we accordingly find mills and factories, in all the settled parts of the country. They are therefore destined to become the seat of manufactures ; and the abundant water-power will be a perennial source of wealth.

Much eloquence of disquisition has heretofore been expended on this question of settling the Townships; and, to a certain point, we cannot refuse our assent to its statements. A barren assent is, however, nothing to the purpose. At the risk of being considered tedious, we must enter into details, even of a minute character, and invoke the patience of the reader accordingly.

A prejudice is entertained by many persons, against the fertility of a certain description of land in the Townships, and it happens to be precisely that which is the most eligible for the new settler. We mean the high hard-wood lands.

The Eastern Townships are mostly mountainous, and this quality contributes not a little, to confer the picturesque beauty described above. In such a country, there are lands of every kind: low interval, always difficult to clear and drain; and high hard-wood land, easy to be cleared, and requiring no artificial drainage. This definite distinction ought to shew sufficiently the superiority of the high lands. On these latter, the trees stand far apart, and the land is cultivable, before the stumps are rotted out. They are likewise naturally drained, so that, in the very first year, after the labour of clearing is completed, a crop may be raised, often the best they ever yield; the soil makes a grateful and immediate return to its proprietor, for the preference, by which he has distinguished it. Not so, however, with the low or interval lands: these cannot be cultivated until the stumps are all removed, or nearly so, a work of great expense, if sought to be effected in less than ten years, while considerable labour is requisite in draining, before the crop can be put in. The hard-wood stumps soon rot, and are extracted without trouble, in six or seven years after the clearing of the land. Meantime the settler can work his land, without much trouble. The hard-wood ashes become black salts, which often pay for the clearing of the land. It were lost time to make black salts out of soft-wood ashes, on account of the small proportion which

they yield. It will be easily understood, that it is much less expensive to make and keep up the roads on high than on low lands, difficult of drainage. It is moreover acknowledged, that the grass, which grows on the uplands, is superior to the produce of the intervals; and this is perhaps the true cause of the superiority of the Township cattle over others. It is a recognized fact, that cattle six or seven years old, which seem to have attained their growth in the Seigniories, being sent to graze in the Townships, continue to increase in size, in a wonderful manner. Are we not to ascribe this to the excellent quality of the grass and the pasturage? We are in no condition to make the assurance, but a few facts in support of the supposition, would appear not to be misplaced.

About eighteen years ago, a Canadian family arrived in the spring, to settle in Kingsey. It consisted of the father, mother, and nine young children. As a father of a family, he must have possessed unusual courage, inasmuch as all his capital consisted of three weeks' provisions, and furniture in a proportion equally scanty. In three weeks this hardy pioneer had made black salts enough, to lay in a new stock of provisions. The same spring, he put in a crop, and that and his labour sufficed for the maintenance of his family through the twelve months. In the following spring, he was able to sow a more considerable breadth; and ever since has continued to prosper. His land is paid for, his children are settled, and he is now in easy circumstances.—For many years an Irish family, having settled on low land in Grantham, struggled with a degree of indigence bordering on mendicity, when they determined to abandon an ungrateful soil. They settled on high land in Durham. By degrees, their condition was improved, and they were enabled to educate, at one of the first institutions, a member of the family whom we could name, were we not prevented by delicacy towards a person, who now fills an eminent position in society.—It were easy to multiply instances of this kind. Many facts, which might

illustrate our position, have also, no doubt, escaped our researches. But, it is objected, these lands are stony, rocky, and soon worn out. Facts must again furnish our answer to this objection. There is in Shipton a farmer, who, twenty years ago, was only a day-labourer. It may be interesting to inquire what is the surplus produce of his farm at this day. We will take the present year, which does not differ from the preceding ones, giving round numbers, in which we pledge ourselves, however, that there is no exaggeration. This prosperous farmer has sold, since the autumn, cattle to the amount of £75; pork, for £22 10s.; butter, for £50 or £60; the hay which he can spare will bring him £20 or £30, and the potatoes £12 10s. or thereabouts. The produce of his farm therefore brings him in yearly a handsome income of £200. We beg the reader to take notice that all the articles above mentioned are over and above what he makes use of, for the maintenance of his family and of his numerous cattle and other live stock. This is pretty well for land which is "soon worn out." Three other farmers, settlers of the same standing, and in the same neighbourhood, on the most stony land in the country, have succeeded nearly as well. One of them derives a satisfactory revenue from the very stones, which have been made a subject of reproach to his farm. A quarry, yielding stone of an excellent quality, has been opened upon it, which serves to make lime, and when dressed is made use of in the construction of the bridge, for the railroad, over the Saint Francis at Richmond. It is useless to multiply instances. What some have done, cannot all do? If all do not succeed equally well, we should not, at any rate, blame the soil, while the fault lies rather in the mode of culture. And this advantage attends the Canadian settlers in Townships, already in part settled by foreigners, that they acquire from them a better system of farming, especially applicable to high lands, on which the ordinary or routine system would find no success.



It has been remarked, that Townships, settled exclusively by Canadians, have made no progress; while in other Townships, such as Halifax, Somerset, Stanfield, Arthabaska, Chester and Warwick, Canadian settlers on lands very similar have succeeded very well, because they have adopted the plans and management of the foreign settlers in the neighbourhood. They have had a kind of model-farm constantly before them, and have profited by it. If we have trespassed too long on the patience of the reader, it is with a view to overcome a prejudice unfavourable to colonization. Another word before closing this chapter: those who prefer the low lands have hope for their reward; the others, solid profit. Can any one hesitate in the choice he ought to make?

It would not here be out of season, to protest against the unmeasured reproaches cast on the Canadians of the Townships for their poverty. Truly, there are among them, as elsewhere, some who are none of fortune's favourites. The very nature of things shows that this must ever be the case in a new settlement. Particular circumstances have co-operated with ordinary causes, to impede the advancement of the French Canadian in the Eastern Townships. These we shall find occasion to unveil hereafter. Meanwhile we may safely assert that, after a fair comparison, the new settlements in the Townships have progressed, these ten or a dozen years past, in a greater ratio than these of the Seigniories.

Our preceding statements ought to show sufficiently to the most incredulous the fertility of those lands which have been most decried as barren. Yes, the lands of the Townships are indeed fertile; and this fertility, combined with the other advantages which they offer to the settler, renders them the most desirable in the country, and is a reason why the French Canadian would vainly seek elsewhere an equal amount of prosperity. The salubrious climate of this part of the country assures to him as much health as may depend on climate. Its rich soil, its water-

power, its minerals, its timber—so capable of being turned to profitable account, and a system of agriculture more perfect, it must be confessed, than that which prevails in other parts of the country, even the breeds of domestic animals superior to those of the Seigniories, form a combination of advantages which will always guarantee to him a supply of necessities and even superfluities greater than any other locality in Lower Canada can offer.

Why then should the French Canadian emigrate to a foreign country? Does he seek a larger share of the goods of Fortune? If Fortune smiles on him in a foreign land, he may perhaps realize a portion of his wishes; but the respect, the esteem of his fellow-citizens, the prosperity which he may enjoy among foreigners, will never make him forget his country. Staying in his native land, can he not enjoy all these things, amidst his brethren, his friends, his fellow-countrymen? In the land of his exile, will the sun shine as pleasantly on him as in his own native country? At the last closing scene, new friends may gather round his death-bed; will they be able to efface from his memory the friends of his childhood, the bright hours of his infancy? or will she be there who watched over him in the cradle, who has shed many bitter tears for his absence? will she be there to receive his last sigh, and lighten to him the dark horrors of the tomb?

But we are wandering from the subject. Hitherto we have looked only on the advantages offered by our Township lands; we have passed unnoticed the obstacles which obstruct the settler. They exist however, and some of a nature not now to be removed; to others it is not yet too late to apply the appropriate remedy.

To the emigrant, it is no matter of reproach, that he has quitted his country. It is vain, to invite him to share the advantages to be found at home, if these advantages are more than counterbalanced by obstacles which he can never overcome. Our appeal lies then to those whom their position and their influence enable to provide a remedy for these crying evils. From their hands the country expects

prompt action, unremitting efforts, until these obstacles are as far as possible swept away.

It is no half-measures which are now called for ; we demand prompt, decisive, energetic action—above all, we would have despatch. Each day, each year's delay, is the loss of so much profit to our fellow citizens, an advantage never to be regained. It is no time to hesitate, when we know, beyond a doubt, by the report of the Special Committee, named to enquire into the causes and extent of the emigration to the United States, that, during the five years preceding 1849, more than 25,000 of our fellow-countrymen quitted Canada. If our country had, like Ireland, an excess of population, to be driven forth ; if the true-born child of the soil could not acquire in it his portion, on which he might settle and gain honourable bread ; if, in his native country, the lot of the French Canadian was to be only beggary, then the emigration of our fellow-countrymen would be a blessing, not a calamity. But it is not so. And is not then this emigration of our brethren from a country, still in its infancy, of the lands of which a small part only are cleared, and which needs to import men and capital from other countries, a subject of astonishment ? Ought not the bare fact (to make use of the very expressions of the Committee,) to “awaken the attention of the legislator, and urge him to inquire, whether all be indeed well in an order of things, which it is his duty to direct and modify ? whether it be the fault of nature herself denying his due advantages to the child of the soil which banishes him, or whether it be not rather the fault of society, which has neglected to open out to her child the free field which nature spread before him ?”

Must not every true Canadian bewail the daily loss of so large a number of families who abandon the fairest portions of their country and its institutions, to seek the States of Maine and Vermont ? Have we made efforts worthy of the cause, to retain our brethren on their native soil ? Has nature been ungracious and niggardly to our country. Far

from this, for whom has she done more than for the inhabitant of Lower Canada? If these be questions to any requiring solution, let him cast his eyes on the south side of the St. Lawrence, from the river Chambly to the Chaudière, on our magnificent forests of elm, maple, pine, hickory, basswood, ash and tamarack, on which the axe of the pioneer has not yet struck a blow; let him consider the rivers, the lakes, the streams, so beneficial to mechanic industry; let him admire, in the days of harvest, the riches and the fertility of the soil of the Eastern Townships; and let him then say, whether our efforts, to people the most important section of our beautiful country, do not deserve our utmost zeal; let him tell us, whether, to withstand the progress of an emigration so fatal, so ruinous, it is not his own bounden duty, to unite with us, in opposing to it a sufficient barrier?

The eloquent and zealous father of this almost national cause, the Abbé O'Reilly, first invited the attention of the public to the Eastern Townships, and his patriotic appeal met with a ready and a general answer. Associations were organized at Quebec, Montreal, Three Rivers and several other places. The Government, to its honor be it said, liberally seconded the motion, by at once lowering the price of the Crown Lands, in certain of the Townships, and even making free grants in others. But has every thing been done that could be done? Does no part of the work remain in abeyance? If the legislature—sole possessor of the power—stops short in the prosecution of the work, in the performance of a sacred duty, from whence and from whom can this richly endowed, this heavily oppressed, district expect the development of its resources. We declare, with painful feelings indeed, but with the sincerest conviction of its truth, that much more than has been done remains to do; and, with a firm conviction of its truth also, we can endorse that momentous declaration of M. M. Cartier and Labruère of St. Hyacinth, "the settlement of the wild lands is probably the most important work which the Government has, at the present moment, on its hands."



For these two years past, Parliament has not ceased to inquire, through its committees, concerning the means to be adopted, in order to keep our young men at home. From one end of the country to the other, the answer has been unanimous : *Find lands for them where they may settle on favourable terms ;—Remove the obstacles which prevent the settlement of the wild lands in the Eastern Townships ;—Open free communications by land and water ;—Improve the main lines of road already open ;—Give us speedily an efficient road law ;—*and you cannot fail to heal this spreading ulcer of the country, the self-banishment of our youth,—“the main-spring of our country’s wealth,” as the Abbé Ferland rightly calls them.

Thus the causes unfavorable to colonisation are these : the high price of land ; the burdensome conditions imposed by certain great proprietors ; occasionally the utter impossibility of acquiring land, inasmuch as the proprietor is unknown ; and the want of roads, and free communications by land and water ; but the master-evil consists in this, that a large part of the eastern township lands has fallen into the hands of a small number of proprietors, whose only aim is speculation. These are the obstacles.

Convinced of the necessity of speedily removing these, it becomes our part to suggest, with sincere humility, the means which we think best adapted to the happy end. These are :—

1. To lay a tax of one penny per acre on all wild lands, belonging to the Crown, to the Clergy Reserves, and to the great proprietors.

2. To establish an efficient road-law, adapted to the wants and circumstances of the locality.

3. To open good lines of communication, and improve the principal roads already made.

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1. To lay a tax of one penny per acre on all wild lands.

With bitter grief we have it to say, that in this most important section of our country, the larger part of the unconceded lands has passed from the hands of Government. Show us the Canadian, who has one spark of love for his country, that does not burn with indignation at the monopolizing of vast tracts of land by men, who not only themselves refuse to occupy them, but by every species of exaction prevent others from settling on them ! Judging by the letters-patent granting these lands, the sales were always made by Government, with the intention of furthering, rather than retarding, their settlement ; but the privileged class of proprietors have defeated that intention, by raising the prices of land, and fixing them at a rate which renders them unattainable; and they have succeeded, in shamefully diverting to their own profit and advantage the harvest of the settlers' toil. Is it matter then of surprise that the youth of Canada flee the country ? The means of the population not answering the abominable expectations of these great monopolists, is it matter of surprise that the excess of population reared in the old settlements, should go to seek in a neighbouring country the protection from injustice which they cannot find at home ? Have we not a right to say, and to be believed when we say, that this is the true cause of "ruin and decay" in Lower Canada ? Yes, these large proprietors, barring the natural spread of the population, are mainly, particularly, and more than all other causes, the authors of the self-banishment of our fellow countrymen ; the bright future of our country is thus offered up a sacrifice to the sordid interest of those who traffic in its necessities. There is matter for deep and bitter reflection in the fact, that while Lower Canada freely, liberally opens her bosom to the emigrant from Europe, the descendants of its first settlers, whose patient and persevering industry in peace, and whose bravery in war have done every thing for the improvement and the defence of this part of Her Majesty's dominions, (the very expressions used by His Excellency

in his answer to the address before quoted,) are driven to quit their native soil, to seek a home, in a land where their beloved traditions and institutions are unknown.

The Abbé Ferland, late Principal of Nicolet College, in his answer to the questions, addressed to him by the Special Committee, (29th May, 1849,) says: "Between the River St. Lawrence and the United States frontier, the cultivable lands may be divided into three belts, running parallel to the River." "The nearest belt to the St. Lawrence includes the Seigniories, in which there are still lands to be had." The second belt is 15 leagues in breadth, by 25 or 30 leagues in length. The third belt extends to the frontier. It is this portion which has been thrown open by the patriotism of our ministers, to the youth of Lower Canada." "The second belt," says M. Ferland, "divided among a small number of large land-holders, has become the domain of monopoly. The labourer there is made use of with admirable patience and intelligence; and when his last drop of sweat has been gathered, and his last rag torn from him, he is sent back to the Seigniories, or driven towards the United States. He is at liberty to go forth, at the head of his family, to increase the crowd of French Canadian beggars."

The Townships of Nelson, Inverness, Dorset, Tring, Somerset, Maddington, Halifax, Wolfstown, Blandford, Stanfold, Arthabaska, Warwick, Chester, Bulstrode, Kingsey, Horton, Aston, Windsor, Tingwick, Shipton, Acton, &c., and a number of others, are included within this second belt, and we are bound to confess and declare, that these vast domains, the property of large proprietors, remain an insurmountable barrier, between the old settlements of the seigniories and the new settlements of the Eastern Townships.

"Agriculture in the Townships," says Mr. Elisha Gustin, of Stanstead, in his answer to the Special Committee, "is generally speaking, in a depressed and embarrassed condition, especially among the ordinary class of

farmers." "This state of things results from the enormous prices, demanded for land, by the great landholders." "The poor settler is cruelly harrassed by them, and is often driven unremunerated for his arduous toil, from the land which he has cleared." "Thus places, which now appear deserted, and threaten to become a second time a wilderness, should be the abodes of men, and teem again with plenty." If the speculations of these great proprietors were but the legitimate use of the fruits of honest industry, the results of improvements, or the fair returns of capital invested in these lands, such speculations would be in the natural order of things, and nothing could be objected to the process. But they are far from possessing such a character of justice and equity. Let us consider for a moment how these things are really managed. Many of the great landholders are unknown; whether it be that they find their advantage in keeping out of sight, in order to come at a later date, and expel from his farm, improved by years of toil—an honest settler, who awaited but the appearance of the owner, to pay its just value; or whether they find it profitable to keep aloof, in order to evade the statute labour which they ought to share. Others, residing far from these their possessions, take little thought about a property of comparatively small value so situated. Occasionally these different parties litigate the possession of certain lands, and law-suits are sometimes lengthened out for years, so as to arrest the progress of the settlement. Others have agents duly authorised to sell lands, and receive the price of them, and well skilled in collecting the value of the timber cut on their lots, but vested with no authority to pay their due contributions for roads and other necessary works. Until lately, these agents could not be sued for their neglect to perform their statute labour for the lands of which they are constituted the guardians. So that these fortunate land-holders have succeeded, by the help of a little sleight of hand like this, in evading their share of public statute labour, without losing a farthing



of the revenue of their lands, and have thus been able to throw on the small band of new settlers, during their early struggles in a newly opened Township, the heavy burden of making and repairing bridges, roads, &c., unless the latter choose to do without them, and to put up with a state of things, which they only can understand, whose portion it has been to travel roads forming the outlets of new clearings. Of course the more extensive and numerous the clearings in a locality,—the greater the amount of roads, drainage and other improvements,—the greater the value of the adjacent wild lands ; but the value added to them, by these means, cannot justly be said to belong to the great proprietors. Not their labour, their capital, have given to them this added value, but the labour of the settler—the sweat of the settler's brow.

We have painted the relation between the early settler and the large landholder, in its least offensive colours. How many are there of the latter, who are not satisfied with merely evading their due share of statute labour, with the results of that slow-moving process by which the working man adds value to their domains ! In the hands of certain of them, a farm becomes a very pitfall. A man takes possession of it, in good faith, buoyant with hope, heedless of the fate which awaits him. Too soon, after a few years' occupation, does he find out the trap into which he has fallen, and is driven forth in rags and poverty. Another succeeds to his hopes, and to his disappointment. These, we may be told, are the exceptions, such barbarity is not the common law. Unhappily facts in our possession which we will cite, vouch but too well for its prevalence.

What is the price of lands in Stanfold, Somerset, Halifax, Chester, &c. ? Usually from twelve to seventeen shillings per acre ; one proprietor, in Acton, asks twenty-five shillings per acre ; and in Arthabaska, the exorbitant and impudent demand has been made of forty-six shillings and eight pence per acre, for lands situated on the Provincial road. Several, who had occupied some of these lands for

years, were thus obliged, by the enormous price asked, to abandon their improvements. It is right to observe, by the way, that the owner holds no less than 10,000 acres, a grant from Government, dated 30th September, 1802; and that, at this rate of valuation, the fifty-four lots which compose his fair domain, would produce £25,200 for wood lots! In fine, since the great proprietors are aware that the railroad, from Montreal to Richmond, will cut through their lands, some refuse to sell, at any price, lots which had been settled on and cleared in good faith; and the poor pioneer is driven from the soil which he has watered with the drops of his heart's toil, which he has painfully redeemed from the wilderness, and invariably without pay or reward.

Such is the fate reserved this year for a dozen families in Stanfold. Two months are hardly passed, since several settlers, in the north part of Halifax, were notified to quit their lands. Poor wretches, worn down already with toil and privations of all kinds, whither will you flee for protection and for refuge? Will you again venture on the painful career of a pioneer? How much rather may we fear, that you will seek your bread in a foreign land, at the cost, which too many pay, of your religion and your morals.

In the Township of Bulstrode, where there are nearly fifty families, established in the 11th and 12th Ranges, three or even four individuals present themselves every year, patent in hand, claiming to be proprietors of the lots occupied by the settlers; no doubt some of them calculate on the ignorance and the simplicity of these poor people; and, all the while, the lands of these settlers are despoiled of the best of their timber, and they must endure the wrong. This could never happen, if the law compelled the large proprietors to register, in the office of the Clerk of the Municipal Council of the Township, their names, their place of residence, and the number of their lots.

Last year, forty Scotch families, settlers of ten years' standing, on the North American Land Company's lands in

Weedon, were driven, by the enormous price per acre demanded by the Company, doubled by the accumulated interest of several years, to quit their lands, and to settle on Government lands in Winslow: the only reward of their toil, the curses which they vented on the Directors of the Company. Is this state of things to be borne? and is it really supposed that while it exists, the settlement of the Eastern Townships can be rapidly effected? Is it not truth incontrovertible, that as long as the Legislature provides no remedy for these evils, vain will be all efforts to give headway to colonization, to which these domains of the speculators will always offer an insuperable barrier?

Far be from us the thought of violently robbing and dispossessing the large proprietors of their lands. The rights of property are sacred and inviolable; but, inasmuch as all agree that these large grants of wild lands, which, for prospective gains, are left to nature, are a bar to the settlement of the most important part of Lower Canada, can Government refuse to listen to the cry of the public, raised from one end of Canada to the other? Is it not the most sacred duty of a good government, to minister to the first wants of the people? Is the state not therefore bound, by every principle of justice, to facilitate, by every means in its power, the settlement of the waste lands? *That* is the first want of the people of Lower Canada.

Were it needful to sacrifice the interests of a few individuals, in order to end an evil universally felt, it appears to us that a Government ought not to hesitate to make the sacrifice. In the case now under consideration, Government is in no such dilemma. No injustice is demanded; it is required only that a long series of acts of injustice should now terminate, that the large landholders should be called to order, and made to bear their portion of the burthens of the state. Amendments of the Municipal Law were passed in the last Session of Parliament, authorizing the sale of land, the proprietors of which are



absent, and likewise enabling the Municipal Councils to levy a tax of one halfpenny in the pound, on all properties situated within each Municipality. Are these amendments sufficient? We think that they leave a great deal to be desired. The public voice requires something more than this light tax; the large proprietors being able to exercise a certain influence in the assessment of properties, it would be, in many cases, greatly diminished. Moreover, it is optional with the Council to impose it or not, and it follows that it will not always be imposed, and that many of the large proprietors will still escape it, and still do nothing to repair the wrong which they have done to the country. The welfare of the Eastern Townships and of the country, and the principle which protects the weak against the strong and powerful, call therefore for a local organization in virtue of which, it may be lawful to tax all wild lands, to the extent of at least one penny per acre. Then, and not till then, can the country admit, that it has had justice done to it against those large proprietors, when they have begun to repair the wrong which they have done. Then, and not till then, will the lands fall from the fictitious value, at which they are now held, to their intrinsic worth, providing only that they shall still be subject to those burthens which of right belong to them. Then will the settlement of the Townships advance in earnest, fed by the influx of the sons of labour from every quarter; "for the best, the only way," says Mr. Watts, member for the County of Drummond, "to advance the settlement of the wild lands, is to render the possession of them burthensome to speculators."

Dr. Boutillier, member for the county of St. Hyacinth, in his letter addressed to the *Canadien*, on the 31st December, 1850, observes judiciously, that the 5,500,000 acres of land, comprised, by his calculation, in the Eastern Townships, would produce, by means of this light tax of one penny per acre, the sum of £22,916 annually. Supposing even that this light tax of one penny per acre



should yield no more than £15,000 yearly, that sum, judiciously laid out in repairing old roads, or making new ones, would of itself be a great boon to the country.

We consider it our duty to invite the attention of Government to a clause of the Act 12 Viet. cap. 31, amending the Act for the management and disposal of the Public Lands, in which it is enacted, "That all lands upon the grant of which fees were payable, and which fees are now due, or upon which settlement duties remain to be performed, or the performance of such settlement duties to be proved, shall be forfeited at the end of two years from the passing of this Act, unless such fees shall be duly paid, and such settlement duties duly performed, and the performance thereof proved to the satisfaction of the Governor in Council, within the said period: Provided always, that nothing in this Act contained, shall be held to apply to free grants of fifty acres, made upon the lines of public roads, as provided by the twenty-sixth section of the Act hereby amended." According to this clause, a considerable number of lots ought to have been confiscated, from and after the 30th May of the present year, the day on which the two years expired, from the passing of the Act cited; for we are witnesses, that the majority of the great proprietors are far from having fulfilled the conditions, on which their grants were made. An inquiry in the different localities, conducted by the agents for Crown Lands, would moreover bring to light many frauds and exactions which many of these gentlemen, with Punic faith, claim a right to practise.

We cannot close this article, without adverting to the oppressive conditions imposed on settlers on clergy lots. The price of their land per acre is, in the first instance, four shillings; but the settler is bound, moreover, to pay a rent during the term of his occupation, at the following rates:

"For the first term of seven years, 25 shillings per year."

“For the second term of seven years, 50 shillings per year.”

“For the third term of seven years, 75 shillings per year.”

A clergy lot of two hundred acres of land costs therefore £40 ; after fourteen years' occupation, it costs £66 5s. ; and after twenty years' occupation, £82. A man who comes to settle in the townships, generally poor, is absolutely unable to pay for a clergy lot, on conditions as hard as these ; and we are free to affirm accordingly, that, of a hundred settlers, who sit down on clergy lots, hardly more than from four to six will be found, who succeed in paying for them. In Bulstrode, to take one instance of a thousand, four families established on two clergy lots for fourteen years past, have made up their minds to forfeit their improvements, and to lose the fruits of their labour, being absolutely unable to pay £66 5s., however willing they might be, for lands stripped of all that constitutes their greatest value : for there exists one express condition, in all future sales of Clergy Reserves, that the purchaser shall not, until he shall have paid the entire purchase money of his lot, cut down or carry away the timber, unless for the purpose of clearing the land, or for building.

“If the example of the Government, which is now selling the public lands at such low rates, if the efforts of good citizens, for the improvement of the condition of their fellow-subjects and the prosperity of their country, if the voice of public opinion which has been raised from one end of the Province to the other, if in fine their own well understood interests, do not lead these great proprietors to change their system, the Legislature must have the power, and will it is hoped, have the courage, to remedy so great an evil.” (29th May, 1849.)

We require nothing impracticable and opposed to public opinion, but we think we have a right to require, that that be done, and done speedily, which has been so effect-

ually done in Upper Canada, where the evil arising from large grants of lands did exist, though never to the same extent as here. We require an enactment, plain, easy to be enforced, and authorizing the imposition of a tax, on wild, as well as on cleared lands, for the purposes of public improvements; by this means, the injury inflicted on the country by the large landholders will speedily be repaired, as it has been repaired in Canada West.

## II. To establish an efficient Road-Law.

Another great obstacle to the speedy settlement of the wild lands, in the Eastern Townships, is the want of roads. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment in the place of a hardy pioneer, in search of land. Having explored a considerable part of the Townships, he has found a lot which, in the quality of the soil, in situation and in price, corresponds with his wishes. Should this lot be one, two, or even three miles from the nearest road, will he undertake to construct an outlet, which might cost him the trifling sum of three or four hundred dollars per mile? The supposition were absurd. Will he expect aid from the neighbouring proprietors? We have seen how much the large proprietors are disposed to aid a new settler in his early struggles. Shall he address himself to the courts? Alas, to lose both time and money, and never perhaps to succeed, however feeble the opposition he may encounter. He must resolve then, perforce, alone, to make such an apology for a road as we meet with, every where in the townships—roads so frightfully perilous, that we might well doubt whether any one could be bold enough to venture over them, if it were not done every day. This is encouragement indeed to the new settler! And yet such is the situation of all those who enter on new lands, in the Eastern Townships, elsewhere than on the great roads opened by Government. Accordingly, we find that lands bordering on these are taken up immediately, at any price.

The law certainly gives to the Municipal Council the power to order the construction of roads; but this power

is rather permissive than obligatory ; and we find accordingly that the great proprietors, who are not without influence in the Municipal Councils, too often find a way courteously to decline to act on the permission accorded to them, to spend their money in road-making. Happen what will, they will always find a way to hinder the construction of roads, and that to the great injury of the settler. The exercise of the powers, granted to the Municipal Councils, ought then to be less discretionary, and rules should be prescribed which they could not alter or violate, at their pleasure: in a word, they should be compelled to enforce the construction of roads, in such manner, that the settler should be free from care on that head. The thing is certainly practicable. In our opinion, the end would be attained, by altering the municipal law; and, in order that we be not charged with a captious criticism of existing laws, and with a desire to abolish old regulations, without concerning ourselves to devise new and better ones, we shall venture to offer a few suggestions, which may perhaps throw light on this difficult question. As we before said, it is no half-measure, which can arrest the progress of the evils which afflict us. A plainer, more easy-working, and more easily understood Road-Law is required. We would propose, then, that the road, upon which is situated the church of the most numerous congregation in the Township, provided it be not a cross-road, should be termed the main highway, and that in the event of there being no church in the Township, or of its being situated on a cross-road, then the law should decide which road should be so termed; that the owners of lots, fronting on this road, should be exclusively held bound to make and repair it, each in proportion to the extent of his land, and that they should be free from all other road-duty; that, at the rear of these lots, there should be another road, to be made and repaired by those whose lots front upon it, each also in proportion to the extent of his land; and that these latter proprietors should also make and maintain the cross-road



leading out to the main highway ; that these cross-roads should be at least three miles apart ; that other public roads be maintained by means of taxes levied on all wild lands ; that the Crown and Clergy Reserves be not exempt from bearing their part, in taxes for these public works ; and, finally, that the Municipal Council be compelled to enforce the law. This brings us naturally to speak of the Municipal Law.

The municipal system is beyond doubt essentially necessary to the people. Under its influence, they have the control of their local affairs ; and their best interest lies in the suitable management of them. All agree that the present system is inefficient, and does not answer the end proposed. The powers which it confers should be more diffused, and given to each locality, if it is intended to work well. If the inhabitant of a parish is unqualified (this is no more than a supposition) to manage his local affairs, will he be better able to understand and to manage those of eight or ten parishes, to which he is a stranger. May we not truly assert, that the present system has not been beneficial to our Townships ; that, on the contrary, it has impeded public improvement in most of the counties ; that it has done nothing for the maintenance of the roads, and contributed in no way to the advancement of agriculture ?

In the Eastern Townships, the present road system is inefficient and a dead letter, for the following reasons : 1. The power of establishing and maintaining roads, being, by this system, entrusted to the County Municipal Councils, is devoid of that unity of design and action which is indispensable to success. 2. The making of roads is, in most cases, through the immunity of the Clergy Reserves, and of the great proprietors, quite beyond the strength and means of the resident proprietors. 3. The great extent of the counties, and the distance from town to town, are reasons why, from the Chaudière to the River St. Francis, there is not a Municipality in operation ; and in order to convince the most

incredulous of this, we dare assert that all through the great County of Megantic, as well as in that part of Drummond which lies between Megantic and the St. Francis, there are, (thanks to our present road-law), neither inspectors nor overseers appointed, to enforce the maintenance and repairs of the roads. This state of things has existed four years.

It is now several years, since Government caused several main roads to be opened: the Craig, the Gosford, the Blandford, the Shipton, and the Lambton Roads, which have no doubt done a great deal to advance the settlement of the Eastern Townships; but these roads, not having been kept up or repaired, are at this day in a deplorable condition. The Arthabaska Provincial Road, which crosses the several townships of Kingsey, Warwick, Arthabaska, Stanfold, Somerset and Inverness, will have the same fate. This road which was finished in 1848, and which cost £15,543 16s. 9d., (including Melbourne Bridge over the St. Francis) beneficial as it is to the inhabitants of the Eastern Townships, will soon be as impassable as the Gosford or the Blandford roads, if the Legislature does not provide, in a fitting manner, for its maintenance in good order.

The Eastern Townships require therefore, in road matters, a law differing from the County Municipalities' law. Let the Government grant a good road-law, better suited to our localities, and which may more effectually reach the large proprietors; let those gentlemen, the greater part of them unknown, absent or studiously concealing themselves until extensive clearings have been made on their domains, be compelled by it to do their part of statute-labour, to pay their local taxes for roads and schools, to clear their roadsides, to unite in forming the common discharges or drains, and in repairing and maintaining by-roads and bridges; and let the execution of this law be entrusted to the Municipality of each township: the results will be all that the true friends of the country have long desired. What is here required will make but slight amends for the wrong

which the great land-holders have done to the general interest of the country.

The most solid support of the prosperity of a new country like ours, the most certain source of its happiness and wealth, is agriculture. It is truly remarked by Mr. Elisha Gustin, "Except this numerous and valuable class of producers, who support the world, and furnish the wealth of nations, be sustained in this Province, beyond their present means, Canada must go down and sink into insignificance." As all acknowledge that it is the farmer who gives subsistence to the population, who supplies material for commerce, that on him depend the welfare and the prosperity of the country, the Legislature is bound, by every means in its power, to raise him from his present adversity.

What the settler desires, what he claims, in return for the sacrifices and privations inseparable from a new settlement, is a farm; but a farm, however fertile it may be considered, will have but little value for him, if no roads open for him a communication, by which he may reach a market with his produce.

To ensure success, each Councillor should be bound to attend, under a penalty, each and every meeting which the law prescribes, or to prove that sickness or urgent business prevented him; and it should be the duty of the Secretary-Treasurer, to sue the delinquent for the recovery of the penalty, before a competent tribunal. As a last suggestion, we shall add, that the Municipal Council should be bound to have a road made, if none exist already—within a certain time, to the most distant range in which one or several settlers reside; that it should be bound to cause to be opened, within a certain time prescribed by the law, the by-road, from each range, at least a mile distant from the dwelling of the furthest resident on each side. These suggestions will doubtless stir the bile, and raise the ire, of certain interested parties. A cry will be raised of "tyranny and oppression." For our parts, we see in it nothing but strict justice, tardy it is true, but sure to remedy many evils.

It would be a dangerous error, to hope to effect the settlement of the Eastern Townships, by sending thither the surplus population of the seigniories, with a few hundred pounds, to provision the new settlers; for what must be their fate, if after having been led to brave the adventurous life of the deep forest, they should be left without roads, without protection, to the mercy of the great proprietors, ever ready to speculate on their daily labour? The right course is to begin by removing the impediments to their success, in the first days of their settlement; neglecting this precaution, your zeal and your enterprise will make victims, not farmers, happy and contented with their lot. In order to produce effects as beneficial as would be the diffusion of our native population over our extensive territory, we invoke, and we confidently expect, the co-operation and the liberal aid of all sincere lovers of their country.

We close these remarks with one made by M. Boutillier, of St. Hyacinth: "Our fellow-countrymen of the City and District of Quebec have exerted themselves honourably, to further the colonization of the townships, but the sacrifices which they have made will have but tardy success, if that section of the country is not favoured, by the enactment of laws more conducive to the settlement of the lands, and the opening of the necessary roads."

### III. To open good lines of communication.

The difficulties above described have discouraged many a settler, about to establish himself in the Townships. To the two obstacles already noticed, however, we must add a third, which is an absolute bar to all progress: the want or the bad condition of main lines of road; and here it were appropriate, to describe the privations and the sufferings of the first inhabitants of Stanfold, Arthabaska, Somerset, Halifax, Tring and Lambton; but who could paint the mournful picture?

During the first twelve years, the settler was compelled to carry home all his provisions on his back: the quintal of flour, purchased from the country merchant at the price of



five or six dollars, had to be borne over swamps, nine miles across. For eight months of the year, he wasted his strength in journeys such as this. It was a matter of necessity, however, with the alternative often endured, of living on roots. Shall we be believed, if we affirm that, in this very year, more than ten poor families were reduced to the hardship of living on herbs, raspberries and bilberries, more than two months, to save themselves from perishing by hunger? The settler seeking a home, commonly very poor, does not possess the means of purchasing on the spot what he requires, on account of its enormous price; and even should he possess some slender resources, the road communication is wanting, by which he might bring his necessaries home from market.

It is beyond a doubt, that settlements made in the neighbourhood of each other, demand fewer sacrifices, and contain more elements of success than do those, which are far apart: while we encourage and facilitate, therefore, the settlement of the Townships nearest to the Seigniories, we, at the same time, advance the more distant settlements, the inhabitants of which would in vain possess good roads at home, if they could not convey their produce to the river. One important line of road, commenced in 1844, and finished in 1848, has been opened into the heart of the settlements, nearest to the river. This main line, known by the name of the Arthabaska Provincial Road, begins from the high road on the south bank of the Saint Lawrence, in the Seigniory of Gentilly, thence passes through the Townships of Blandford and Stanfold, to the Church of Saint *Eusèbe* (in Stanfold); from this point, it branches to the east, and passing through the Townships of Somerset and Inverness, ends in the Gosford Road, near the chapel in Inverness. It branches also to the west, at the Church of Saint *Eusèbe*, through the Townships of Arthabaska and Warwick, and ends in Kingsey, on the Melbourne Road. This road, in Blandford, is in a condition so frightful, that in the month of August last, it was, for three weeks, absolutely impracticable. A family from Crane Island, emigrating last autumn to the Townships,

were delayed more than six weeks at Gentilly, and obliged at last to await the winter-roads, in order to get through it. The Department of Public Works has recommended the immediate repairing of this road, from the Parish of Gentilly to Saint Louis, in Blandford. It is perhaps the most urgently needful improvement to be made by the Legislature for the Townships, in the southern section of the District of Three Rivers. In order to convince the most sceptical of this, it will suffice to inform them, that along this road are conveyed, every year, more than a thousand barrels of potash and pearlash. There were manufactured in 1850, 675 barrels of pearlash, in Arthabaska and Chester, 325 barrels in Stanfold, and nearly as much in Somerset.

The Blandford road is the most frequented by the inhabitants of Blandford, Stanfold, Arthabaska, Maddington, Somerset, Chester and Warwick, and of the north part of the Township of Halifax: for these Townships are mostly inhabited by settlers from the District of Three Rivers. We ought here to remark, that, in comparison with the other parts of the country, the county of Nicolet has done most to colonise the Eastern Townships; nevertheless, the absence of easy communication between the parishes of the county and the Townships, has produced a numerous emigration to the United States. But the majority of the settlers in Kingsey, Horton, Aston, Bulstrode, Blandford, Stanfold, Arthabaska, Somerset, Chester, and in the north part of Halifax, came from the parishes of Saint Gregory, Bécancour, Gentilly, Nicolet, and Saint Pierre-les-Becquets; and it is also the youth of these parishes who settle the rich lands of Wotton, Stratford, and Winslow.

The inhabitants of the county of Nicolet may justly boast, then, of having been the earliest pioneers in one part of the Eastern Townships. They it was, who, in the face of great and numerous obstacles, by dint of mere courage and without protection, have marked out the track for succeeding settlers. Had the country, for whose prosperity these hardy men laboured with such energy, encouraged their zeal, how

many of our fellow-countrymen, now exiles, would have remained at home? In the District of Quebec, the parishes, which send most settlers into the Townships, are Lotbinière, Sainte Croix, Saint Antoine, Saint Nicolas, Sainte Marie de la Beauce, Saint Jean Chrysostôme and Saint Henri.

The roads which we now recommend to be made or improved, are, for the District of Three Rivers: 1. The Blandford Road above mentioned; 2. The improvement of the Shipton Road, leading to Port St. Francis. 3. The opening of a road which, starting from the south-west angle of the seigniory of Bécancour in the parish of Saint Grégoire, would intersect the Township of Aston, keeping the main line of Godfroie to the River Nicolet, and from thence, bending to the north-east, across Bulstrode, would join the road which crosses the tenth range in Stanfold. This road, long a subject of petition in the parishes of the District of Three Rivers, on the south side of the St. Lawrence, and in the Townships of Aston and Bulstrode, would cut through several excellent tracts of land, and bring many Townships into direct communication with Port Saint Francis.

For the District of Saint Francis we recommend the opening of a road, which should leave Drummondville, pass through the Townships of Grantham, Upton, Milton and Granby. This road, which would intersect the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad, and the main post-road of the Eastern Townships, would open to agriculture one of the most fertile plains in the country.

For the District of Quebec: 1. The Gosford Road, which cost the Province extremely dear, is at present in a dangerous state, from Lake Nicolet in the Township of Ham, to Saint Giles! Two years ago even, several hundreds of persons whom their indigence obliged to quit Quebec, having spent several days in traveling sixty miles over the Gosford Road, with a view to settle on Government lands in Garthby, Stratford and Winslow, were so discouraged by the bad state of the road, that, having reached Lake William, they renounced the advantages offered by Government. 2. The Lambton

road, which furnishes an outlet, on the Kenebec road, in the parish of Saint François de la Beauce, to the Townships of Tring, Forsyth, Dorset, Lambton, Price, Aylmer, and Winslow, has never been more than traced; and is now in an almost impassable state, notwithstanding the good will of the settlers, already numerous in these Townships, but hitherto not organized as Municipalities. This road cost the Government in all not more than the trifling sum of £1,500, and yet it is the nearest and best outlet to the populous counties of Dorchester and Bellechasse, and to the overflowing industrial population of the suburbs of Quebec, when want of mechanical work compels them to seek their bread in an excellent and fertile soil. In order to convince the reader of the convenience of this outlet, we may affirm, that the Lambton road has, in the two before-mentioned counties, arrested the tide of emigration flowing yearly to the United States, and carrying labour and enterprise to the forests and factories of Maine. These Townships, newly opened to the settler, and which, in 1847, numbered a population of only 1800 souls, now contain nearly 4000; and that number would certainly be doubled, in less than three years, if the Lambton Road were carried on to its junction with the Victoria Road in Winslow, a little above Lake St. Francis. For it is a well attested fact, that several settlers, after having nearly broken their necks, in the deep and terrible channel called the Lambton Road, which crosses the mountains of Tring, have lost heart, and returned to the timber-yards in the Suburbs of Quebec, to waste their health and strength in excessive labour, the wages of which are often too paltry to furnish the means of decent subsistence. 3. Finally, the opening of a line from the Craig Road, through Broughton and Stratford, to its junction with the Lambton Road.

- Upper Canada has greatly gained in riches and population by its great public works, and by its facilities of transport, which have cost the Province more than £300,000, especially by its canals, which connect the Atlantic Ocean with the great Lakes of Canada. If, in Lower Canada, the Eastern



Townships, which constitute one of its principal sections, had been as well provided with means of communication, if several of their rivers had been rendered navigable for small steam-boats, emigration would not have impoverished us, and a wide-spreading country would have been thrown open to Canadian enterprise, which is now, and will long continue to be, of little value—that is to say, under the present system of colonization.

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And now, having paid our tribute to the work of colonization, having conscientiously exposed what we think to be the main obstacles to the settlement of the wild lands of the Eastern Townships, and proposed the means which ought to be employed to remove them, we indulge a flattering hope, that the difficulty of the undertaking will prevent neither the Government nor the Legislature, from bestowing on it their serious attention.

Let us labour then in concert for the success of an enterprise so honourable: let the partisans of the onward movement, the true friends of their country and of their unfortunate countrymen, unite like one man, to demand the reforms which we have recommended. They do injustice to none; they are all, on the contrary, to the advantage of the Canadian population. They are due to the country; we shall obtain them.

This is the true time, more than any other, to achieve them; what has been already done, to advance the good work, is a pledge that the Legislature will not pause in the labour of reform, until it has brought the settlement of the wild lands to a happy consummation.

We cannot, however, conceal from ourselves, that those who are enamoured of tranquillity and exclusiveness, who take a warmer interest in what passes in the Indies or on the shores of the El Dorado, than they do in that which passes less than a hundred miles off, in their own country, will smile on us, not with approbation, but contempt. Those who believe that all Canada lies along the banks of the



St. Lawrence, will be tempted to disbelieve us ; the large landholders, and all those who consider their private advantage rather than the public interest, will utter a mighty howl of indignation. Nevertheless, we have considered it to be our duty to raise our voices, in order that when, at some future time, all the importance of this section of our country shall be better understood, we may not be reproached with having kept silence on the subject of the obstacles which obstruct the settlement of the wild lands, while there was still time to remove them.

In conclusion, we must add, that if demands so just do not find a hearing and compliance, and that speedily, the truly patriotic enterprise of settling the Eastern Townships will totally fail ; and, before thirty years are past, we may find more French Canadians in the States of Vermont and of Maine, than in the Eastern Townships.

And you, sincere lovers of your country, who commiserate the lot of so many of your brethren, driven forth to exile, unite with us in efforts to detain them round the domestic hearth, and ever repeat to those who would abandon it, the old adage,—

“There’s no place like Home.”

JAMES NELLIGAN, Curé of Leeds.

J. H. DORION, Ptre. Miss’y. in Drummondville.

ANT. RACINE, Ptre. Miss’y. in Stanfold.

LEON PROVENCHER, Ptre. Miss’y. in Tring

CHS. TRUELLE, Ptre. Miss’y. in Somerset.

L. AD. DUPUIS, Ptre Miss’y. in Halifax.

B. McGAURAN, Ptre. Miss’y. at Sherbrooke.

L. TRAHAN, Ptre. Miss’y. in Shipton.

N. LECLERC, Ptre. Miss’y. in Lambton.

P. DE VILLERS, Ptre. Miss’y. in Arthabaska.

JER. SASSEVILLE, Ptre. Miss’y. in Kingsey.

J. MELC. BERNIER, Ptre. Vicar of Halifax.

Eastern Townships, March 31, 1851.

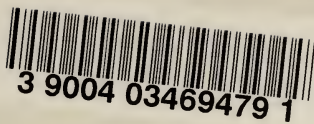












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